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CALVARY TO PENTECOST

BY

F. B. MEYER, B. A.

AUTHOR OF

"THE SHEPHERD PSALM," "JOSHUA," "THE LIFE AND LIGHT OF MEN," ETC.

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PREFACE

"I HAVE chosen you out of the world," the Master said. And again, "They are not of the world." This is the true position of every member of His mystical body—the Church.

In the purpose of God, we have passed out of the world which rejected our Lord, and belong to that in which He is supreme. We are not oblivious to the needs of the world which He so loved and loves. Its sorrows and sins lie near our heart; its call for help, like the piteous cry of sailors from a wreck, is ever in our ears; its needs call out our most strenuous energies. But we

do not belong to it. We enter it constantly, to be its salt and light; but our true standing is without it, where Jesus is.

We need, then, to understand and embrace the principles of the Risen and Ascended Life, which dates from the cross, as its dawn, and climbs in glorious gradations toward the meridian of a day that can never be shadowed by night. Some of these principles are expounded in the following pages.

F. B. Meyer.

CONTENTS.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	The Wondrous Cross	11
II.	The Resurrection	25
III.	Ascension Day	47
IV.	Christ in You the Hope	61
V.	Spiritual Environment	73
VI.	The Exorcism of Self	87
VII.	Agonizing unto Perfection	103
VIII.	The Peace that Guards	117
IX.	The Art of Sitting Still	135
X.	The Supreme Gift of the Ascension	147

I

THE WONDROUS CROSS

I

THE WONDROUS CROSS

THE passing years enhance the preciousness of the cross. We thought we loved it, and the little hill of Calvary, and the garden with its sweet spring flowers, in those days, now receding far behind us, when we first found refuge beneath its outstretched arms. But as the shadows of life begin to fall, however slightly or evidently from a westering sun, its meaning unfolds itself. There is more than one manner of fruit on the tree of life; more than one point of view from which to behold it; depths as well as heights, lengths as well as breadths.

And yet when we speak thus of the cross, we never forget that its value consists in what He was who hung there in dying agony. Not the cross, but the Crucified. Not the tree, but its precious burden. Not the altar, but the Divine Victim who there surrendered Himself without spot to God, as the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but for the sins of the whole world. We use the cross as a comprehensive word for the work which the Son of God accomplished there.

The river that flowed through Eden parted into four beds, and the doctrine of the cross may be divided into four great lines of truth, respectively presented by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, by the Apostle Peter, by the Apostle Paul, and by the disciple

whom Jesus loved. We do not for a moment suggest that any of these writers confines himself to one aspect of the death that Jesus died. Each of them touches at will every note in the octave of Calvary. But each gives his own tone and color to the white ray of divine light as it radiates from the cross of the Saviour of the world.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews was evidently educated amid the sacred associations that centered in the Temple at Jerusalem. With throbbing heart he had mingled in the vast festal assemblies. He had loved those days of exuberant joy; had felt the thrill of psalm and hymn, sung of the choirs of Levites; had realized the privileges of the blood of sprinkling, of altar and priest, of near access to the holy

Presence that dwelt between the cherubim.

All these had vanished, as light off the clouds of sunset, when with the rest of his Hebrew fellow Christians he went forth to Jesus, outside the camp. At first they had felt dreary and sad, but suddenly had come to see that in the cross of Jesus they had obtained the spiritual realities of which Leviticus could only give the transient symbols (Heb. x. 19; xii. 23, 24).

And perhaps this is the first aspect in which we view the cross. We account it the brazen altar where Jesus put away the sins of the world. We see there the Lamb of God charged with our guilt and penalty, and bearing it away forever. We have our consciences purged from dead works. We

have a right to enter the holy place through His blood. We stand in the presence of the burning glory of the Shekinah, unabashed, unashamed, accepted in the Beloved, and entranced in the music of words that float as music around: "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

The Apostle Peter is deeply sympathetic with this view. He could not be otherwise, with the Hebrew background of his life. And if we may interpret an expression of his literally, he seems to have been an eye-witness of the sufferings of Christ (1 Pet. v. 1). As though he was led by a strange fascination to stand afar off, and see the last sufferings of Him whom, for all that he had denied Him, he loved with all his heart. He repeatedly refers to the sufferings of

Christ, and holds them up as our example.

But he develops a further view. He speaks emphatically of our redemption (1 Pet. i. 18; 2 Pet. ii. 1). In his thought each disk in the blood of Jesus was a coin of priceless value, purchasing us to be His slaves. As though we had stood in the slave-market of the world, "sold under sin," but He came there with blood as His purchase-money, and bought us to make us bond-slaves to Himself.

This conception of the death of Christ commonly follows upon that already suggested. We first look upon it as a sacrifice, atoning for our guilt, and bringing us near to God; then we find it to be a masterful argument for consecration of all we are and have. We learn that we are not our own, but bought

with a price, and we glorify Him in our body and spirit, which are His.

But the Apostle Paul lays stress on yet another aspect of the wondrous cross. We have already found there propitiation and consecration; we now find identification (Gal. ii. 20; Rom. vi. 8). His perpetual thought is, that as we were in the first Adam when he fell, so we were, by some mysterious law, in Christ when He died, and rose and ascended into heaven. In Him, our Ark, we crossed the waters of death, from the old world, where sin and lawlessness were rampant, into the new heavens and earth, in which dwelleth righteousness.

When He hung in dying anguish on the cross, we were there, though we felt none of the pain; when He descended

into the grave, we passed thither also, though we shuddered not with the chill air of the vault; when He arose, we left death behind us forever, and became citizens of a world where the standards of earth are reversed forever, like reflections in standing water.

This thrilled the apostle with ecstatic joy. *He was free from the condemnation of the law.* Its pealing thunder rolled beneath his feet, reverberating in the dark valleys far below, but he had passed to the upland lawns, the blue of heaven above him, the sense of freedom, joy, hope, buoyant in his breast.

He was also free from the false standards and judgments of the world. The princes of this world had put his Master out of it, as the Gadarenes before had driven Him from their coasts; and the

expulsion of the Lord had been the expulsion of His slave. It was not meet that the one should be without and the other within. And the apostle was glad to see the cross, standing with outstretched arms to forbid all commerce between the believer and the world. Not for him its standards of failure or success; not for him its smiles, or baubles, or rewards; not for him its amusements or blandishments. He was crucified to the world, and the world to him, and he gloried that it was so.

He was also free from the dominion of the self-life, to which he so often refers as "the flesh." This had been his bane, until one day he saw his self-life nailed in effigy to the cross of Jesus (Rom. viii. 4), as a man may start to see his ugly features reflected from a crystal mirror;

and he realized that by the cross of Jesus he had been born into a world where self in every form was under the curse, and where it was replaced by the Spirit of love and life and resurrection. "No longer after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Thus the Apostle Paul was filled with this great thought of his close identification with the death of the Lord Jesus, by which he had passed into the Eternal and Unseen, the Infinite and Divine; had become a citizen of the new Jerusalem, and a resident in the heavenly places, of which the person of the Lamb is focus and center. His eternity had commenced. He was translated that he should not see death. He had passed into a land with which the old life had no extradition treaty.

The Apostle John views the death of

Christ as it affects our daily walk and conversation. With him the blood cleanseth from all sin. He never forgot that he saw blood and water come from the wounded side; and that Jesus came not by water only, but by water and blood. He says that Jesus washed us from our sins in His blood; that the blessed saints have washed their robes and made them white in His blood; and that we have right to enter through the gates into the city only when we wash our robes in the precious blood. The robes get sadly soiled as we go through the various demands of daily duty and the scenes in which we have to earn our daily bread, and therefore it is most helpful to learn that there is a provision made in the death of the cross for daily purification.

That blood never loses its virtue; and whenever, in our walk in the light, we are sensible of the least soil of evil, we may wash and be clean. Thus we learn to walk with God with an uncondemning heart. Not that we are all we ought to be in His holy sight. Even if we are kept from presumptuous sin, we come short of His glory; but we are constantly sensible of the cleansing grace that purges our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

Ah, wondrous cross indeed, in thee we find remedy for all the ills of life! Since thou wast cut out of some forest tree, and didst bear thy burden on the place of a skull, guilt and penalty are no more; we are the bond-slaves of the sweetest Master. We have passed as in a new Ark the waves of death, and

landed on resurrection soil; and we have learned the secret of walking the world as those who belong to another. Ah, blessed heavenly ladder by which we have passed into the eternal and heavenly sphere!

The tree cast into the bitter Marah waters, which made them sweet to the taste; the slip of wood flung into the river, which caused the iron to forget the attraction of the earth, and swim; the pole on which the serpent of brass was elevated in the view of Israel—all have their counterpart in the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died.

II

THE RESURRECTION

II

THE RESURRECTION

THE resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead has established the belief in the immortality of the soul on the impregnable basis of fact. There was a time when it was a matter for speculation; an argument founded on the analogy of nature; an inference from the nature of the soul. But since the gospel of the resurrection has been proclaimed, life and immortality have been brought to light. We are no longer left to infer that men may rise and live in the hereafter. It is enough to say that a Man has risen, and He the second Adam, the representative Man, the

type to which man is being conformed. And therefore, as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ not only established Christianity by putting the divine seal on all that He had done and taught, but it filled the world with a new hope, an ecstasy of delight, a ravishment of joy, which were as great a contrast to the sad forebodings of paganism, and to the uncertainty of religious teachers, as the flowers of May to the gloom of December. We are so accustomed to the assertions of Christianity that we find it difficult to realize how vast was the transformation it wrought on the outlook of the soul of man. Like the women, it had been gazing into a sepulcher; now it greeted the risen Christ and shared His life.

The New Testament is therefore full of this gladness. The new wine of the kingdom fermented vigorously in the new bottle-skins that swelled beneath its touch. The voice of Christian song awoke. The walls of the catacombs bear witness to a triumphant hope that laughed at death and leaped forward to embrace the life that beckoned it. At one time an enthusiasm for martyrdom seized upon the Church, and led multitudes to dare the uttermost penalties of their foes that they might sooner drink the cup of immortality. Women and children, youths and maidens eagerly pressed forward, through stake and wild beast, to quaff the water of life where it issues from the throne of God.

But there are four main aspects in which the resurrection may be regarded:

First, that of the Epistle to the Hebrews. These Hebrew Christians had some reason to fear that the religion of Jesus Christ might be only a phase in the growth of a great religious system, and that it might pass away, as the patriarchal had done before the Levitical, or as the Levitical before Christianity. What security of tenure was there? What assurance that their children might not have to relinquish the Church, as they had been called upon to relinquish the temple? What if, after all, there were the element of transience, the seeds of decay, the little rift of dissolution in this system, of which the name of Jesus was center and circumference, beginning and end!

Such thoughts were met and forever dissipated by the argument based on the

resurrection of the Lord Jesus which attested His perpetual existence and priesthood. Four times at least the words are repeated, "a priest forever." Twice the emphasis is laid on the fact that our Lord's priesthood, unlike that of the Levitical priests, is indissoluble and inviolable. They were many in number, because hindered from continuing by reason of death; but He is perfected forevermore, and because He ever liveth is able to save to the uttermost of time, as well as of space, all who come unto God by Him.

Religious systems naturally circle around the priest. Christianity finds its center in Jesus. What He is, it must be; and since He is unchangeably the same, it can never be superseded or pass away; it can never wane as the stars of

the old dispensation did in the growing glory of the new; it must abide as the one final revelation of God to man, and the way by which man may enter into fellowship with God.

The second aspect is that of the Apostle Peter. He is preëminently the apostle of hope. He bids us be sober and hope patiently for the grace to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ, and makes constant allusion to the glorious realities of the unseen and eternal world, on which the Christians of that dark time should set their thoughts. But all his hopes for himself and his converts were built on the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He blesses God the Father for having begotten them again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from

the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. The hope of the inheritance was founded on the empty grave. The stone that was rolled away became the cornerstone of the new temple of hope.

The traveler in Norway, who comes across homes and hamlets perched on almost inaccessible heights, or shut in by the mighty rampart of mountain ranges, will find no difficulty in imagining a community contained within itself, and oblivious to the existence of a great outer world. To such a society that world might be a subject of speculation, discussion, and argument. The villagers might be accustomed to accompany each other to a certain point on the mountain track, when summoned by an irresistible impulse to ascend it, but none of those

who passed that point ever returned. Rumors, guesses, ancient legends might declare that there was a world beyond the mountain barriers to which the road led, and where all who had departed were living a fuller and richer life than before; yet still the information within their reach would be mere surmise. Hope would flicker like the will-o'-the-wisp over the marsh. But supposing that one of their number, whom they had known, went along that path, and after being absent for some days returned, and went often to and fro, declaring that the path led somewhere, that there was a better world on the other side, and that they should meet their beloved once more. Do you not see what a change would come over the people's hopes? No longer shadowy and decep-

tive, but strong, clear, sure. An anchor so surely fixed as to bear the greatest strain. A light so clear that the shadows of uncertainty must flee away. This is the Apostle Peter's "living hope."

There is also the aspect presented in the writings of the Apostle Paul. As in respect of the death, so of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the apostle's constant thought is identification. "Quickened together with Christ and raised up with Him." "Raised together with Christ, seek those things which are above." If we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him. It is his one thought that in the death of Jesus he passed from the old world into the new, and that he was living on the shores of the new world, the world

of resurrection and life, the world of which Jesus was King and Lord.

The apostle, therefore, found in the Lord's resurrection the daily motive and law of his life. He was always regulating his action by the laws of that new kingdom, which was unseen and eternal, and whose laws were laid down by the Lord in His discourses and parables. This makes the difference between the Christian and the man of the world. They are occupied about similar circumstances, but the latter acts on the principles of this world, whose motive is selfishness, and its aim personal aggrandizement; while the former deals with every incident as a citizen of the new Jerusalem, and upon the principles of the Sermon on the Mount.

We are risen with Christ in the thought

and purpose of God, but we must open our natures wide to the Spirit of the resurrection, the Holy Ghost, that He may conform us to the ideal Easter-life. The exceeding greatness of God's power that wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead to His own right hand, is waiting to do as much for us, but we must yield to it. It will enter and transform our spirits, then permeate our souls, and finally, when the Lord shall come, it will reach and vitalize our bodies, which will rise in the likeness of the risen Lord: transformed from corruption to incorruption, from mortality to immortal youth.

Lastly, there is the aspect presented by the Apostle John. Before Christ's resurrection man thought that night and death were supreme, out of which all

things were born, and to which they went. Life might be fair and beautiful, but it was evanescent. Each flower fell before the inevitable scythe, or faded. Each day, whatever the promise of its dawn, died on the edge of the western wave. Each child, however beautiful, passed through maturity into death. And so they fabled the Prometheus, the Laocoon, the fall of Troy. Life was profoundly sad to these people, who tried to solve all problems by their intellect, and imagined that at death life became extinct, like the torches they extinguished at the tomb of their friends. The world, they thought, would become one day a sarcophagus of graves, while Erebus and Chaos resumed their ancient sway.

To meet this, it was not enough to

affirm that the Son of God lived: it was needful to say, also, that He had died, and having tasted the sharpness of death was living on its farther side. It was on this that the Master laid emphasis when He said to the exile of Patmos, "Fear not; I am the first and the last: and the Living One; and I became dead, and behold I am alive forevermore, and have the keys of death and of Hades."

The Son of God entered the lists with Death to try the question as to which should be the reigning power in the universe, whether life or death, light or darkness, corruption or immortal strength and beauty. They grappled for mastery, each with the other, in the wilderness, on the cross, and in the grave. At first Death seemed victor. He appeared to triumph over the one Man,

as over all other men. The Prince of Life was slain. The hour and power of darkness vaunted their supremacy. And Chaos seemed about to spoil the palace of Life. But it was only for a moment. It was not possible that Christ should see corruption or be holden of death. Life broke from the sheath and hush of death into the rapture of the Easter morn. Death was robbed of its sting, the grave of its victory, and the lord of death of his power to terrify.

As the blessed Lord emerged from the empty tomb, leaving behind Him the adjusted cerements of death, stepping forth into a garden where the spring flowers exhaled their rarest fragrance, it was forever established that life was stronger than death, light than darkness, truth than lies, God than sin.

In His life and death and resurrection the Lord Jesus has revealed a life which is stronger than death and hell, and which holds them in its thrall, locking and unlocking them at will. This life He waits to give. He binds it as a victor's wreath about the brows of them that overcome. He carries it with Him as He rides forth, conquering and to conquer, until grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.

So utterly subordinate to Christ are death and Hades that He is said to hold their keys. From the jailer He wrenched them, and He keeps them. In a sense they exist, but the one is His slave, and the other the vestibule of His palace. They serve His purpose. They do His will. If He opens the door, neither the hand of love, nor that of

skill, can shut it. If He shuts, all the hatred of men or demons cannot force it open. The life of Jesus, which He has and gives, is not only impervious to all noxious influences, but has acquired the mastery of them, which it holds forevermore.

Such are the main aspects in which the sacred writers view the resurrection. Let us put their chalice to our lips and share its exhilarating joy. "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust." Far up the heights, listen to the call of Life, bidding us arise and be gone. Let us leave behind the clinging mists of the valley, over which death has cast its shadow, and stand on the uplands where the sons of the resurrection live in a light that never dims, and amid joys which are never old.

Let us live as the sons of the resurrection. "You will never see me die," a veteran Christian was wont to say to his children; "I shall only fall asleep." And so it befell. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death. Let us claim our privilege in the risen Lord. It is appointed unto men *once* to die. We have died once in Him; and now let us venture all on His own sweet word: "He that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

III

ASCENSION DAY

III

ASCENSION DAY

BECAUSE this great anniversary necessarily falls on another day than the Lord's Day, it attracts less attention than Easter or Whitsuntide, but it is not less momentous than either. In some senses it is the crown of the year. The mystery of the holy incarnation, the agony and passion, the festal joy of Easter would all lose their significance and power were it not that they led up to the ascension.

That scene on Olivet is always an attractive one. The early morning, when as yet the peasants had not begun to pass along the mountain track on

their way with market produce to Jerusalem; the sun rising behind the mountains of Moab, and bathing with gold some fleecy clouds, waiting like chariots drawn up to receive their King; the villages of Bethany and Bethphage within sight, and perhaps sending up one or two ardent lovers of Christ, who had been previously invited to join the little group gathering at the appointed rendezvous. Then the gracious Lord, never more tender than then, giving His last instructions, speaking the final commission, and assuring His followers of His unfailing presence. Now His hands are extended over them in blessing; and as His benediction falls on them as dew, He yields Himself to the attraction of His native home, and begins to ascend. But those words of grace still flow from

His lips, and those hands are still outstretched in blessing, until the cloud envelops Him, as though it were the curtain that hung before the portal of the true temple that God pitched, and not man.

The ascension could not have been invented. Even supposing (a supposition which cannot be entertained for a moment) that the course of Christ's history could have been wrought out from the imagination of an idealist, it would not have entered his thought to add the marvels of ascension to those of resurrection. Had he been able to conduct his story through the anguish of Calvary to the wonders of the Easter morning, he would have stayed his hand there. He could not have conceived another climax beyond. He could not have ven-

tured on a farther apotheosis. Or even if he had felt the necessity of depicting a farewell scene between Christ and His disciples, it must have been fashioned on the model of the translation of an Elijah, or the death-sleep of a Moses, within view of the assembled people. No mind could have invented anything so majestic and so unobtrusive, so sublime and yet so touching, as the ascension. In conception it stands alone for beauty and impressiveness in the entire range of Scripture.

It was the realization of God's original design for man. "Have thou dominion," God said to Adam. Man was meant to be the vicegerent of the Creator, exercising undisputed sovereignty over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air, over the cattle and over

the earth. David says he was "made to have dominion; and that all things were put under his feet."

But that crown of supremacy was rolled from his head into the dust; he yielded to the temptation of Satan, and became his thrall; and the right of dominion passed from his hand to him who had shown the supremacy of his fallen nature over that human nature which had come fresh from God. Therefore, says the sacred writer sadly, we see "not yet all things put under him."

Nature, indeed, seems in arms against man. Her storms shatter his mightiest buildings, her oceans engulf his Armadas, her frost and heat defy him, her creatures resist his yoke. And beneath her multiform machinery we are conscious of malevolent influences that turn

the winds and tides and seasons and other natural forces against us.

But when Jesus ascended, in Him, as the ideal Man at least, this was reversed. All things were put under His feet. He was raised to the loftiest pinnacle of power that the universe could offer, not as God but as Man. And thenceforward it was only a question of time when all that was true of Him should be accomplished in the experience and realization of His brethren.

It was the harbinger of the final overthrow of Satan. In one of his grandest paragraphs the Apostle Paul tells how, in the ascension, our Lord was raised far above all rule and authority and power; phrases which, in another well-known passage, he uses of the wicked spirits in the heavenlies. In another

place he describes Christ as leading captivity captive, as though the world and Hades, death and Satan, were dragged behind His triumphal chariot like fettered slaves.

It may be, therefore, that beyond that cloud hell made one last stand. There was no controversy about the supremacy of Christ as God; even Satan would not have been so mad as to contest His right to return to His throne. But the battle broke out as to His right to take our human nature with Him. From the Fall the devil-power had been supreme. Man had owned Satan's mastership, doing his behest. This power he was loath to surrender. And he never would have surrendered it had not Christ wrenched it from his grasp, in the hour of His ascension, which

secured his overthrow and established forever that man in Christ is stronger than the devil, and that the doom of Satan's empire is certain and inevitable.

Let us not be afraid of Satan. We may be but as atoms in the feet of Christ, but even then we are above the devil, for it is written that God has put all things under His feet. Let us not look up at Satan from below, but descend on him from above. He matched his power against Christ and failed, and he will fare similarly in conflict with all those in whom Christ dwells. "Thou shalt tread on the lion and adder: the young lion and dragon thou shalt trample under foot."

It was the entrance of our High Priest into the most holy place. "He passed *into* the heavens," said the older ver-

sion. "He passed *through* the heavens" is the correcter rendering of the Revised Version (Heb. iv. 14). As the high priest of old passed from the view of the people, bearing the blood of atonement in his hand, so did Jesus pass from the brazen altar of the cross to become our representative within the veil, a minister of holy things, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. "Christ entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." The high priest entereth into the holy place year by year, with blood not his own; but Christ entered once for all, bearing His own blood, in the marks of Calvary in hands and side, as of a lamb that had been slain.

No trembling soul need now fear to draw nigh. Christ has dedicated a new

and living way into the holy place. The veil has been rent in twain from the top to the bottom. Sin itself need not make us hesitate, because the blood speaks in the midst of the throne, and we have a great high priest over the house of God.

It was the occasion of receiving great and precious gifts. When He ascended up on high, He not only led captivity captive, but He received gifts for men. In His own wonderful being as Man the Spirit had resided since His birth; but now, as the representative Man, He obtained from the Father the special power to receive and presently bestow the Holy Spirit and such other gifts as His Church needed to equip her for her struggle with the world.

Each one of us shared in that glorious bestowment. "Unto each of us was the

grace given, according to the measure of the gift of Christ." We may not have claimed our share. We may not have asked that the portion of goods should be transferred to us. We may not have participated in the gifts of the Pentecostal age. But they are nevertheless ours, waiting for us in the hands of the risen Lord, just as pardon and redemption once waited before we came to the cross in the exercise of faith.

The ascended Christ waits to bestow the gifts of His ascension on those who believe. Whatever you lack as evangelist, pastor, or teacher, you will find in Him. But it is the profoundest of all mistakes to attempt to work for Him or for men in the present age without being equipped with those special qualifications He waits to impart.

The ascension points our thoughts upward along the same track. We look for a Saviour. This same Jesus shall so come in like manner. By the way He went, He will return. The days are fast approaching when that pathway will glow again with glory as He hastens to receive His Bride to Himself; and then from sea and earth His saints will go to meet Him, caught up as He was caught up, blessing the world as they leave it, but above all eager to see Him as He is, and be forever with the Lord. Till then let us live the ascension life!

"Chains of my heart, avaunt, I say!
I will arise, and in the strength of love
Pursue my Saviour's pathway to His home above."

IV

CHRIST IN YOU THE HOPE

IV

CHRIST IN YOU THE HOPE

It is meet that the chief Christian temple in the greatest Gentile city should be dedicated to the Apostle Paul, because it is to him that we Gentiles owe our knowledge of two of the deepest mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.

The first of these mysteries is unfolded in Ephesians iii.—that the Gentiles are "fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus." It was the cherished hope of those who held closely by the traditions of the Mosaic law that they could turn the new wine of the

kingdom into their old and broken bottle-skins, and fill the Jewish temple by making it the vestibule of the Christian Church. It was to oppose this idea that the apostle spent a life of privation, persecution, and incessant suffering. He saw clearly enough that a new spirit was working among men which could not be confined within the restraints of a material and typical system. In season and out of season he protested that the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ was a new entity in the world, that the one condition of entrance was faith, that there was no preference given to the Jew over the Gentile, that in Christ Jesus was neither Jew nor Greek, and that its gates stood wide open without partiality to all who found in Christ an asylum from the storm,

satisfaction for the heart, government for the will.

The second of these two mysteries is disclosed in Colossians i., and is perhaps the more wonderful. As the apostle fulfilled his stewardship for us Gentiles, his own mind was filled with wonder and rapture at the transcendent glory of the secret that he was commissioned to tell; and surely his face, as he dictated the burning words, must have been suffused with heavenly light, as though it had caught the glow of the sunrise.

The immanence or indwelling of Christ is the characteristic fact of Christianity. Our Lord became incarnate, died, and rose again that we might become His home and temple. Christianity is not a creed, but a life; not a theology or a

ritual, but the possession of the spirit of man by the Eternal Spirit of the living Christ. A man may have all else, be orthodox in creed, correct in practice, observant of forms of worship, but if he lack the divine life he has not yet seen the kingdom of heaven. In regeneration the living Saviour actually becomes the tenant of the regenerated nature; and as the life of the animal is superior to that of the plant, and the moral and mental life of man superior to that of the animal, so the life born in the Christian soul distinguishes its possessor from all other men. The first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam a quickening Spirit.

The reason why the indwelling of Christ is so little recognized by the majority of Christian people arises from

the inwardness of its shrine. Below the senses, keen to appreciate every change in the world around; below the tastes and preferences, the fears and hopes, the resolutions and desires which characterize the soul-life; below our self-consciousness, self-energy, and all that goes to make up our individuality; in the depths of the spirit, the part of our nature in which we touch God most closely, the holy of holies of our being, Christ finds His residence and comes to dwell.

Are we not conscious at times of uprising thoughts that defy speech, of hopes that overleap the narrow horizon of our life, of yearnings and impulses and inspirations that surge up from inner depths? All these witness to the existence of that marvelous capacity

for God which characterizes the spirit of man; and it is there, in the innermost depths of our being, that the living Christ enshrines and hides Himself.

It is not wonderful, then, that, with all our searching, we cannot find Him out. He enters like the gentle zephyr. We can detect no footfall in the passage or on the stair; we cannot discern what He is doing any more than we can follow the workings of nature in the roots of the trees in spring; and because His presence will yield to no test that our senses can devise, we are apt to think it is not there, and to suppose that it cannot be for us to say with Paul, "Christ is in us—in me, the hope of glory."

We must therefore avail ourselves of that wonderful faculty of faith which is the key to all Christian living and alone

can give us the assurance of things hoped for, the test of things not seen. Faith does for the spirit what the senses do in our natural life. As eye and ear and touch reveal the presence of those we love, so faith is eye and ear and touch to the spirit. She sees Christ, touches the robes in which He veils Himself, hears the golden bells that ring at every movement of His feet; and raising her voice with unhesitating certainty, assures us that He is present; as much so as though there were no heaven for Him to fill, or myriads of spirits waiting to draw their all from Him, as the flowers beside the brimming stream fill their cups from its tides.

It is well, therefore, by faith to reckon that this is so. Let us often say aloud, "Christ is within; God is here." Let

us reverently enter the shrine of our inner life, and commune with Him there. Let us believe that He waits within us to be at any moment just that which we need most: patient in the impatient; calm in the restless; strong in the weak; wise in the ignorant; loving in the unforgiving. But let us fear above all the energy and assertion of our selfhood, so constantly arrogating to itself importance, and rushing forth through all the avenues of our life.

It is only as we die to the world around us, and to the self-life within us, that we realize the *glory of this mystery*. If we were more tranquil in our behavior, quiet in our movements, self-possessed, willing to wait only upon God, pausing before answering, lifting up our hearts before opening our letters,

seeking direction before making engagements or forming plans, we should be conscious of the rising up within us of another life than our own, a purer, stronger, richer life, reproducing something of the glorious life He lived once among men.

What a glory the knowledge of this secret will bring into face and life! The orchid root breaks into the glory of the flower; the light ray is unraveled in the hues of the rainbow; the Christ was manifested in the glory of the transfiguration, and His secret indwelling reveals itself in a glory that never shone upon sea or shore.

This mystery also enriches our lives: "the *riches of the glory of this mystery;*" that is, the man who enters into its realization becomes sensible that he

can meet the demands of his life with a wealth of resource, an exuberance of energy, with a glow of enthusiasm which had been previously foreign to him. It was the knowledge of this that made the martyrs glory in the fires, and has made it possible for the weakest and poorest of mankind to enrich the world with thoughts and words that can never die.

It is much to have a rich environment from which to extract the nutriment our natures need; but it is more to possess the indwelling of Christ, in whom all the fulness of God dwells, and to feel it rising up in us night and day, and only asking us to cease from our own works, that He may be all in all.

V

SPIRITUAL ENVIRONMENT

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TWENTY years ago the word *environment* was rarely used. It might occur in scientific treatises, but it was almost wholly unfamiliar to readers of magazines and newspapers. Now it is impossible to escape it. It is the stock phrase with the social reformer, the essayist, the religious teacher. It is perpetually in vogue.

And this is due to the fact that we have come to see the immense importance of environment for healthy life. There may be a perfect and vigorous germ, but if the circumstances of its

growth are not propitious it will inevitably droop and die. Take, for instance, the child of healthy parents, all whose vital organs are perfectly formed: if it lack proper nourishment, if it be reared in sunless or fetid atmosphere, if the water be tainted and its conditions uncleanly, these things will go far to destroy the advantages of its parentage, and to make the tiny flame flicker ominously in its socket.

A perfect peach-blossom may nestle in delicate beauty on the bough of a healthy and prolific tree, but it requires a sunny and propitious atmosphere, full of morning dews, and nights of warm rain, and days of radiant sunlight, before it can weave the luscious, thirst-quenching fruit.

And it is so with the fruit of the

Spirit—the produce of our life—so rare that the Father will intrust its culture to no other husbandman. It is not enough that we have been born again of the Holy Spirit, and become partakers of the divine nature; we must be careful of our environment, or we shall miss the crown and blossom of our life, to secure which the Son of God died on the cross.

But what environment could we have better than is around us always? We sometimes wish that we had been privileged to be present in the upper room when the air was stirred with the advent of the Holy Spirit. But this is still the age of Pentecost, and He is as certainly present with the Church and the individual as He was when He crowned each meek brow with fire.

We think that to have been beside the Apostle Paul when he wrote the eighth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, or beside Peter when he opened the kingdom of heaven to the Gentiles, or beside John when in Patmos, girt by the blue Ægean, he beheld heaven's opened door, would have necessarily done for us what in these degenerate days we have no right to expect.

It is more than probable, however, that we might have had these coveted positions and seen nothing, heard nothing, felt nothing, of the spiritual glories that were unfolded to the enraptured vision of these favored souls; while if they were now to share our life, to walk beside us in our streets, sit beside us in our public conveyances, and live beside us in our homes, it is almost certain

that they would discern the presence of the Lord, and the realities of the eternal world, with as much precision as they did in the old days, rapidly receding across the ocean of the centuries.

The Spirit of God is with the Church. Every day may be to her a day of Pentecost. The living Christ is here amid the golden candlesticks. There is as much of God in the place where these words are being read as in heaven itself. It is not needful to go back into the past or forward into the future to find Him—He is here. All around us is the blessed atmosphere of the eternal and spiritual. It is a mistake to sigh for anything more than this. Whatever is needed for the nurture of a noble, useful, and blessed life is as near us as the

ocean to the scale of the fish, or the sunbeams to the gorgeous plumage of the humming-bird.

But something more is necessary. The environment of peach or animal or child may be all that could be desired for its nurture and beauty, but the organism itself must have the faculty of extracting and absorbing the qualities it needs. Of what use are sunbeams and dewdrops, if the peach-blossoms cannot transmute them into the fruit which exists only in rudimentary form? Of what avail the rich provisions that strew the ground, if the infant's digestion cannot avail itself of their nutriment? And so we must do more than live in the greatest age that has ever passed over our world. We must recognize it, and be glad of it, and appropriate its trea-

sures, weaving them into the fabric of our soul, the structure of our life.

This is where so many of us fail. It is not that our age is degenerate, and our opportunities mean and poor, but that we do not know how to use our environment, extracting from it its priceless gifts, and assimilating them in the inner man.

There is as much electricity among the degraded Hottentots as in London, but it is of no avail to them, since they know not how to beckon it from the clouds and yoke it to their chariots. Probably there are forces throbbing around us of which Christ availed Himself in the working of His miracles, but of which we know nothing. They are within our reach, but they do not help us, because we do not recognize them;

or even if we were aware of their existence, we should not know how to catch and tame and use them. So the mightiest forces of the spiritual world are nigh us, even in our mouth and heart, but the method of appropriating their blessed properties is largely a lost one to the Church.

It is we who require changing, not our environment. Like Jacob, we must be still and sleep, that we may see the shining ladders linking our mean lives with heaven, while angels go to and fro. Like the two disciples, we must share our slender meal with the stranger at the village inn, that the scales may fall from our eyes, and we see the Lord beside us. Moreover, we need grace to appropriate.

It is instructive to notice how each

living thing takes from the sunbeam what it wants—one its aroma, another its color, a third its luscious taste. So should we extract from Christ whatever we require to complete our character. The short-tempered must take patience; the passionate, purity; the cowardly, moral strength; the domineering, patience; the downcast, comfort. We must not simply pray for them, but take them. This holy boldness is our right. We know that whatsoever we ask, which is guaranteed by any promise of God, we receive of Him, not in some distant time or place, but here and now; and we may so surely reckon that we have received as to be warranted in going forth and acting on the assumption that there has been a real accession of grace to our soul, ena-

bling us to do what before would have been utterly beyond our power.

Let us not then sigh for the lost age of gold, since the King of all ages is here. Let us not blame our circumstances or surroundings, which the great Husbandman has arranged with the most careful consideration of what would best promote our welfare. Let us receive as well as ask, take as well as entreat, use what we know God has given, in the absence of any rapturous emotion, and only knowing that He is faithful and cannot disappoint the trustful soul.

In brief, let us abide in Christ; let us keep ourselves in the love of God; let us carefully derive from the "all things" which God has given us, as profitable for life and godliness, the whole wealth

of helpfulness that we need, and that they were intended to convey.

Thus, in a deeper sense than is sometimes realized, "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

VI

THE EXORCISM OF SELF

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SELF is the pivot around which the natural man revolves. It is the essential principle of every sin, and has been ever since that first sin, in which Adam preferred what was pleasant to the eyes, and good for food, and calculated to make him wise, to the will and word of God. Sin is the assertion of self. The sensualist asserts that the indulgence of his passion must take precedence of his duty to God and his reverence for the nature God has made. The oppressor asserts that the sufferings of his victims are as the small dust of the scale if only his coffers are filled, his power

augmented. The liar asserts that it is more important for his credit to be preserved than that truth should be paramount in the world around. Beneath the purple of the emperor, the ermine of the judge, the cowl of the monk, the broadcloth of the business man, the fustian of the peasant, self-worship has been the mainspring of human activity and crime.

At our conversion a strong blow is struck at the dominion of self. We have to be saved altogether by the grace of God, and for the merits of Another. Our own efforts are proved to be useless and worse. Our prayers and tears and righteousness become hindrances rather than helps. Absolute bankrupts, we have nothing to pay. Utterly powerless, we are dragged by Another's hands

from the dark waters which threatened to sweep us to perdition.

But though the dethronement of self begins at conversion, it is not completed then, or for long years. In fact, during all the life that follows we are constantly becoming more aware of the subtlety and all-pervasiveness of the self-principle. We detect it in moods and dispositions where we never expected to discover it. It puts off its filthy rags, and attires itself in the somber garb of humility or religious zeal. It busies itself in the work of God. It takes a foremost place in acts of self-denial and devotion. It multiplies its activities. It glories in its unobtrusiveness. It loves to choose the lowest seat. It congratulates itself on its conquests and growing perfection. And all the while, in its self-compla-

cency, it shows that it is a mere mimicry of that genuine holiness which is the direct product of the work of the Holy Spirit.

The great antagonist of the self-principle is the Holy Spirit. He lusts against the flesh; and the *flesh* is *self* spelled backward. And if we surrender ourselves to the Eternal Spirit, through whom our Lord offered Himself upon the cross, we shall find that the work of self-destruction will proceed apace. The marble will waste, but the image beneath will grow. The outward man will perish, but the inward man will be renewed day by day. The crucifixion of the self-life will proceed in the heart side by side with the ever-waxing glories of the Easter morning and the ascension mount.

The work of the Holy Spirit is antagonistic of self because He is the Spirit of love. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who is given unto us, and the spirit of love is antiseptic to the spirit of self. They are mutually destructive. They can no more coexist than light and darkness, heat and cold, carbolic acid and the microbes of disease.

When Jonathan loved David as his own soul, it was possible for him to view without jealousy the growing influence and power of his friend. "Thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee." How great a contrast to the gloomy monarch Saul!

For love of David the three mighties became oblivious to the overwhelming numbers of the Philistine garrison, as

they broke through their ranks to draw water from the ancient well which was by the gate of Bethlehem.

For love of the Bridegroom the greatest of woman-born could view with joy the transference of popularity and the interest of the crowds from himself to Him whose shoe-latchet "he was not great enough to loose." The dwindling audience on the river's bank excited no regret or surprise, since the rest had gone to swell the glory of his Lord. "He must increase, and I must decrease."

The loyal heart of Bethany, in its much love for the dear Master, who had revealed to it His deepest secret, was indifferent to the cold criticism of the apostles, and especially to the cynicism of Judas, expended its choicest stores, gladly performed a slave's office, broke

the alabaster box of very precious ointment on His head, and wiped His feet with her hair.

And what but love could have nerved the mother to stand beneath the cross, or the women to brave the dangers of an Eastern city at dawn to visit the sepulcher!

Ah, Love, what canst thou not do! Thou canst make the timid brave, and the weak strong. The nervous bird owns thy spell as in defense of her young she turns to face her pursuer. The martyr, the patriot, the hero have learned of thee the secret of finding beds of down on stones, and gardens of flowers on barren sands. Thou didst bring the King Himself from the midst of His royalties to the cross, and He counted all things but loss that He might redeem the

Church on whom He had set His heart. Then self will be dethroned, the cross of daily-dying will be robbed of its bitterness, the furnace floor will become a flower-enameled pathway, if only thou shalt reign in us supreme!

Therefore the apostle said, "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again." The love that can expel self is not the vague love of a principle or theory, but of a person. It is the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. "I saw," says George Fox, "a sea of light and a sea of ink; and the sea of light flowed into the sea of ink, and swept it away forever."

On one occasion, as Dr. Chalmers was riding on a coach in the Highlands, at a very dangerous part of the road where it overhung a precipice, the horses took fright and were near precipitating the coach and all its occupants into the ravine beneath. The driver vigorously applied the whip, and the horses, stung with pain and dreading further inflictions, forgot their fear. He observed that one fear expelled another, and coined the expression, "The expulsive power of a new affection." Fear expels fear. Sunlight extinguishes firelight. The love of a noble woman often redeems a man from the sway of baser passions. And the love of Christ, wrought in us by the spirit of love, will make us free from the love of self. For His sake we can harbor nothing that would cause

Him grief or be at all inconsistent with the completest loyalty.

It has been argued whether the apostle meant Christ's love to us or ours to Him. The contention is needless. It is the same sunbeam whether striking the mirror directly or reflected from it to the eye.

Christ's love to us is transforming. A Norwegian lady tells how a little child was brought to her orphanage, so repulsive in its appearance, and loathsome for its sores, that she felt she could not love it. But one day compassion for its motherlessness made her stoop over the wan little face and kiss it. Instantly the most exquisite smile spread over the features, as the consciousness of being loved sank into the heart. From that moment the whole expression of the

child became transformed, and it grew to be the jewel of her family.

So the consciousness of Christ's love to us will transfigure us. Only give it time to sink in as you sit at the foot of His cross, and reckon how much He must have loved you, since He dared to die for you, being an enemy and ungodly.

Similarly, our love to Christ will work a wondrous change. It will wean us away from all that grieves Him, just as the love of a noble man will draw a maiden from the pettiness of her life, and make her share in his aims, ideals, and companionships. Love possesses a secret magnetism by which she can entice the soul from chosen home and friends to become a pilgrim of hope in company with the twin-soul to which it

has leaped, recognizing its twin. Would that thus our souls might leap to Christ and forever sever themselves from the attractions of the world and the dominion of self!

"Love took up the harp of Life, and played on all its chords with might—
Touched the chord of Self, which passed in music out of sight."

But perhaps there is a deeper meaning still in these words. Christ's love may be Christ's love in us. When Christ becomes a resident and inmate of the inner man, He comes arrayed in all His beautiful garments. There is the sweet savor of His love poured forth as fragrance in the air, and the scent of myrrh, cassia, and aloes makes the inner palace redolent with perfume. Then out through each avenue of our nature go

the telltale tidings of the dear indwelling Lord. Often in passing through the crowded street one is arrested by the breath of flowers wafted from the florist's shop, where the sweet prisoners of garden and woodland shed forth the aroma of the hothouse on the chill or dusty air. So when Christ dwells within, His love is exhaled from the heart into the life.

Then the one passion is to magnify Him in the body, whether for life or death. We call upon all that is within us to bless His holy name. To live is Christ. We think no more what man may say of us; we care only to secure fresh love to Him, new thoughts of His beauty, His tenderness, His worthiness, His redeeming grace. It is a matter of perfect indifference whether men praise

or love or hate. We only care that they understand a little more truly what He can be, what He is, what His love is capable of. To die in doing this were gain indeed. Thus self is exorcised, and troubles us no more.

VII

AGONIZING UNTO PERFECTION

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AGONIZING UNTO PERFECTION

THEY are marvelous words that the apostle says of himself. In our own version they are sufficiently startling: "Christ in you, the Hope whom we proclaim, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ, *whereunto I labor also, striving according to His working, that worketh in me mightily*" (Col. i. 28, 29). But in the language he wrote the word *striving* is *agonizing*. It is the word used of a racer or wrestler, of a man straining every nerve and muscle for the

prize. Similarly, the words rendered *working* and *worketh* are really *energizing* and *energizeth.* The words gain vividness and intensity while we read them thus: "Whereunto I labor also, agonizing according to His energizing, that energizeth in me mightily."

In the spring, when the first flowers herald the advent of the boundless wealth of natural life, we become keenly sensible of the putting forth of God's energy. It throbs in every flower and tree, in orchard and hedge-row. So it is in the heart and life of each regenerate man. God is in him, and energizes in him; and it is for him to agonize, according to the inworking of the Divine Spirit of life.

But what was the goal of the apostle's agony? What object was that to-

ward which the divine energy bore him? Why that straining nerve, that eager strife? To the superficial glance it seems as if he sought nothing else than that each of his converts should be presented perfect in Christ; but the word *also* conveys an added thought, a touch of deeper meaning. It is doubtless true that the apostle was eager to see each spiritual child stand complete in all the will of God, but it is equally true that he sought it with equal earnestness for himself.

And what of this *perfection* which he so strenuously sought? The thought at the root of the Greek word is *end*, or fulfilment. The perfect thing is that which fulfils to its utmost limit its ideal. Everything has an ideal, toward the fulfilment of which it strives. There is

an ideal for the waterfall dropping from the uplands where the snows are melting; an ideal for the Alp that rears itself in splintered glory against the deep blue of the sky; an ideal for the tree that spreads itself in the parkland, and for the flower that unfurls its secret loveliness in the glade. The ideal is possibly never realized. It exists in the mind of God alone. It combines in perfect and finished beauty, too fair for earth, all the essential properties of grace, beauty, and usefulness, peculiar to the order of which it is the norm or type. But every member of the family of which it is the ideal is impelled by an inward impulse to strive toward its attainment. Though it has never been realized, and never can be realized, in texture however delicate, in hue how-

ever exquisite, in form however shapely; though ages have striven for it, and failed; yet it is the supreme goal for which each member of the family makes.

So there is an ideal man. In nature the ideal exists only in the mind of God, and has never been perfectly realized, because sin has blighted creation, and the creature is made subject to vanity. *But the ideal Man has been manifested.* Human hands have touched Him, human eyes beheld Him, weary heads have rested near His heart. And each regenerate soul must strive even to agony to realize that ideal, and to be conformed to the image of the Son, that He may be the first-born among many brethren. This is perfection, the fulfilment of the divine ideal, the realization of the divine type.

We must agonize for this. All around us there are indications of such agony. See how the forest trees strive to realize their ideal growth, though they are pent in on all sides by their competitors. Mark how the bird will persevere against every discouragement and difficulty to fashion the ideal nest. Consider the ingenuity by which nature tries to gain her end, even when there is malformation and disease, as though she would not be thwarted in her purpose or defeated in her design. Would that such agony were ours! In spite of difficulties, discouragement, natural drawbacks, let us agonize to fulfil so far as possible the divine ideal presented in Jesus Christ our Lord.

But the parallel between natural and spiritual growth holds still farther. *We*

have within us the germ of the perfected manhood of Christ. His seed remaineth in us. We have been made partakers of the divine nature. What is that incorruptible seed of which we are begotten again, except it be the germ of the Christ-life? And as the seed of flower or tree, as the young life of bird or beast, aspires to realize their perfect ideal, so that holy thing which has been born into our hearts by the Holy Ghost can do no other than aspire toward an even closer approximation to the likeness of the Lord Jesus.

It may not be possible that we should ever perfectly attain unto it. "Not as though I had already attained" must be our perpetual confession—"I follow after." There will be some curl in the leaf, some stain or freckle in the flower,

some defect or excrescence. The limitations of our mortality, the taint of our nature, the conditions of the atmosphere, all militate against the perfect attainment of our quest; and those who are nearest it will think themselves farthest away. Still we must agonize toward it, prompted by the inherent nature of that which was begotten in us by the regenerating Spirit.

Then, to put the same thought in another form, *we are joined by faith to the perfect Man Himself.* As the vine-root, hidden far away in the earth, tries to repeat itself in every green frond that waves in the balmy air, and every reddening grape, so does the Christ-life, pouring into our nature from the heart of our Lord, yearn to repeat itself more fully and perfectly within us. Every

time we loathe ourselves and repent; every time we catch a new vision of our ideal, and long to transfer it to ourselves; every time we feel within ourselves a kindredship with great and holy souls, we are receiving another pulse of the life of Jesus seeking to express and realize itself. At whatever cost, we must then agonize to answer and realize the divine promptings, "not disobedient to the heavenly vision."

Directly we touch Christ, though the touch be slight as that of the woman on His robe, a relationship is established between Him and us, and from that moment His perfect manhood begins to flow into our innermost being, molding it after the fashion of His own.

But, to put the truth in yet another form, *we have within the same Holy*

Spirit that fashioned and energized within the human nature of Christ. Through Him He was conceived and anointed; and by Him He offered Himself without spot to God, and was raised from the dead. This blessed Spirit is actually within us, and is striving to conform us to the image of our Lord. In some He has been so often grieved and thwarted that His energizing is reduced to a minimum. But in others He energizes mightily. Probably the more we yield to them, the more mighty do those energizings become.

This is where our agonizings must begin. Not to be saved, but to gather up with miserly care and to translate into immediate action those blessed yearnings and energizings. Agonizing that

nothing be lost—agonizing to work out in each detail what He works in.

Deliverance from the power of sin is not the supreme attainment of the Christian life. It is incidental, though necessary to it. The mother longs to see her child delivered from the disease that scars its skin, or the fever that is burning up its life, but she would not be content for the child merely to be delivered. She longs to see it grow to perfect maturity. So deliverance from sin is but the stepping-stone, the vestibule and threshold of the real life.

God's energies are generally slight and gentle at the beginning. Do not miss them by expecting something overmastering and awful. Follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. But the silver

thread will become a stream, the stream a river, the river pulsating with the throb and beat of the ocean tide; launch on the rill, and you will presently feel the tidal currents. Then agonize to get from them all they have to give.

VIII

THE PEACE THAT GUARDS

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THE PEACE THAT GUARDS

CLOSELY associated with the resurrection song is the resurrection peace. On the evening of that first Easter Day the Master's first words were of the peace which He had won a new power to speak, through those wounds which He showed on His deeply scarred flesh. "He stood in the midst, and said unto them, Peace be unto you."

It was the old Hebrew salutation, familiar to the patriarchs in that world of which echoes still linger in the speech of the wild Bedawin of the desert; and the high priest, fresh from the very

presence-chamber of Jehovah, with the glow of the Shekinah on his face, uttered it in his threefold blessing, for which the congregation had waited patiently. But the words were new-minted when the Lord spoke them amid the rapture of that Easter night. He had promised to give them His peace as His last bequest, but it was only as the Holy Ghost nestled as a dove in the heart of the Church that the full wealth of sacred meaning hidden in the words began to be unraveled and disclosed. It was needful that Rom. v. should be written to show that the foundation of that peace lay in the agony and blood of the cross, and is only possible to the soul that has been justified by faith in Him who died and rose again. It was needful that Col. i. should be penned to show that the peace

made through the blood of Christ should spread through the universe of God, until it had subdued all rule and authority and power. It was needful that the Book of Revelation should be added to teach the Church, by many an exquisite symbol, such as the palm-bearing crowds, the tranquillity of the sea of glass, the calm of the vales through which the Shepherd leads His flock, the music of the harps, what that peace is which is the heritage of the saints.

But nowhere is the office of this peace more clearly indicated than when the apostle says, "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard our hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus." The word *guard* is unique, and indicates the patrol of the sentry who passes to and fro before the outer gate, examin-

ing each intruder, and preventing the entrance of any whose presence would menace the well-being of the inmates of the home. It is a sublime conception that God's sweet angel Peace—the child and daughter of His deepest Self—the symbol of His own unutterable repose, should undertake to keep the hearts and minds of His children from the molestation of those passionate emotions and perturbing anxieties which sweep human life, as the winds fling themselves in passion on landlocked lakes, stirring the waters into the fury of storm.

The sentry stands between the doorway and the crowd that would break upon the sacred precincts, and wards the people off, who with their clamor and ruthless hands would spoil and destroy. No thief may pass to steal; no foul-

mouthed ruffian to fill the air with his reviling, or defile the ears of gentle women or little children; no tyrant bandit may enter to assume the headship of the home, and gratify his insolence or passion. Whatever tumult or violence is without, the billow breaks helplessly upon the barrier of soft sand, and beyond, the fields of peace are enameled by the flowers of joy, safe from the intrusion of the turbulent wave. What the coral reef is to the sweet islands of the Pacific, protecting their dainty tropic luxuriance from the mighty billows of the ocean, *that* God's peace is to the hearts that nestle within its inclosing walls.

It keeps the heart, the apostle says. Now the heart is the seat of the emotions; the center of our affections; the

hearth whose ruddy glow sheds light and heat throughout man's nature; the shrine of the love which we give to God and man. It is there that the furnace of life is hidden, moving its machinery with irresistible impulse. It is there we treasure the memory of voices now hushed, of the touches of vanished hands now still. It is a chamber around whose walls hang the pictures of those who have loved us, and whom we have loved ever since love awoke within us. And just because the affections of our nature are so mighty in their all-pervasive influence upon us, they are the object of Satan's direst attacks.

We love right objects wrongly with the idolatry of love, with the unreasonableness that sacrifices their well-being to the gratification of our own passion,

or with an absorbing selfishness that unfits us for life's other claims. We love wrong objects, casting a wealth of affection on those whom God has placed beyond our reach. Even when we love rightly, it is through our affections that we are visited with those anxieties and fears that fill us with alarm, that ruffle our serenity, and impede our progress in grace, and veil the face of God. This is specially the temptation of youth and age. *Of youth*, because the young heart is so susceptible to impression, so retentive of the face, the eye, the act, which has won its confidence, and so prone to intrust all its stores in the slight bark of another's life. *Of age*, because when the heart has been often widowed, and has seen one by one its treasures engulfed before its gaze, and has discov-

ered that all the stores of honor and wealth given by material things are not to be compared with the gold, myrrh, and frankincense of love, it clings with fond tenacity to its dwindling circle, hearing in every footfall the step of the destroyer, and detecting in every zephyr the portent of the storm that shall engulf the residue of its possessions.

If there is a power that can intercept the incidence of what we dread, that can still our hearts' alarms, that can pacify our anxieties, that can give the hush of God's own peace to allay perturbing dread! If there is a sentry that can keep the house of our heart free from molesting alarm! If only our affections can be guarded and kept when the storm of passion threatens to rise, or when the margin of moderation is about

to be crossed! It were a gift worthy of God upon the one hand, and welcome to man as more indispensable than the very bread of his life.

It keeps the thought. If the heart is most easily perturbed in youth and age, the mind is most deeply exercised in the passage of middle life by the strain of life, the pressure of its responsibilities, and the thronging crowd of its anxieties. Thoughts about the result of past mistakes; thoughts that forbode disaster; thoughts of opportunities that will never return; thoughts which become bewildered by their own complexity; thoughts about the mystery of God and providence and life, which turn back baffled from their flight; thoughts about the reasons of things; thoughts that weary, as a strained eye wearies with attempt-

ing to penetrate the distance of the horizon or of the sky; evil thoughts, jealous thoughts, vindictive and passionate thoughts. The vagrant thought of the impulse; the wandering thought, alighting upon the heart as the bird upon the roof-ridge; bad thoughts, flung like missiles flaming hot.

The mind is like a hostelry where crowds pass in and out, and the pavement is worn by many feet; or an exchange where the products of every land are handled; or a palace made for a king, but invaded by a mob. Is there anywhere a power that can marshal these thoughts? Resisting the entrance of those that have no right to intrude, and promoting the regulation of those that justly claim admission! The apostle says *the peace of God* can do it. We

should have thought that she was not strong enough for so stern a work. But the apostle quoted from his own experience when he said, "The peace of God shall garrison your hearts and thoughts." When that peace is within, ruling there, it reduces chaos to cosmos, confusion to order, as a gentle mother in a family of boisterous children.

A twofold law controls the operation of God's peace: "In *nothing* be anxious; but in *everything*, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." It is not enough to say to men, "Don't fret, don't worry;" we must give them something better. Not a bare negative, but a blessed positive. It is not that we are to spend our days in long, entreating prayers; but in the simplest, plainest

words, and about everything, however trivial and insignificant, simply to *make our requests known.* Prayer and supplication, mingled with the fragrance of thanksgiving, must tell out the story of need and desire into the ear of the great Father. Spread the letter before Him; cast the tangled skein at His feet; take to Him the broken fragments of the shivered casket which only yesterday contained the jewels of life; open to Him the wounds from which the bandages have been recently torn, and which are yawning and smarting. It is no use worrying. Do not go about with a melancholy face and whining voice, as if God were dealing more hardly with you than you deserve; do not sit down in despair, as if the joy of your life had fled forever. Just tell Him how things

are with you: what you hoped; what you want; what you think would promote your happiness and goodness; what is needed to complete your life: then leave it there. You have committed your cause to the wisest and most tender, to the strongest and truest Friend. Leave there thy gift at the altar. Anoint thy head and wash thy face. Go forth to think and practise whatsoever things are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, gracious, and the peace of God will open the way to the God of peace Himself. Upon the heels of His messenger the King will come. When the palace is permeated by the atmosphere of heaven, the Presence that makes heaven will shed its glory through every apartment of the soul.

These things pass understanding;

they belong to the realm of the unseen and eternal. They are part of those thoughts which are higher than our thoughts, and of those emotions that pertain to the nature of God. But though they cannot be understood; or expressed in mortal language; or told by strain of harp, or glint of summer light, or vista of earthly repose and beauty; though words fail, and Imagination drops from her exhausted hand palette and brush, and Hope herself returns as Noah's dove, bringing but one leaf from a whole world of vegetation—yet these things may be experienced, realized, enjoyed by the heart that is in Christ Jesus. Out of Christ Jesus, perturbation and alarm; in Christ Jesus, the peace of God Himself.

And thus we come to participate in

the God of peace (Phil. iv. 9). The attribute of the Person leads to the Person. We no longer receive some gift of His ineffable nature; but we have found Him, we possess Him, we are possessed by Him, in whom love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, and goodness have their home.

IX

THE ART OF SITTING STILL

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"SIT still, my daughter," Naomi said, as the two lone women sat together, while the gray dawn broke over the sky. Each had her special thoughts, thoughts that tended to disquietude and restlessness. The elder was eager to find a home for the young life which had twined itself so tenaciously around her. The younger was filled with hope and fear and wonder, as she stood in the doorway, which seemed about to open into a garden of delight. It is not easy to sit still when young life is throbbing through our veins, and hope

beckons us forward, and our natural impulse is to do something to secure the accomplishment of our plans.

Months before these two had traveled together from the valleys of Moab, where the girl was known as the Rose. At first, life in Bethlehem had meant a rush of bitter memory, sad foreboding, bitter privation; but of late there had been a turn in the tide. Those strong young arms, filled with the gleaner's sheaves, had beaten back hunger and want, bringing comfort and help to the aged heart of the mother, for whom all pleasantness seemed to have passed, and whose eyes would wistfully turn at sunset to the long range of the hills of Moab, glowing in the slanting rays, because on their farther side lay the three graves where her life lay buried. How

natural that Naomi should strive to win rest and home and love for the one who was more to her than ten sons!

It is not on the pathos of this story that we desire to dwell, but on the reason that Naomi gave Ruth for the hush on her throbbing nature, for the stillness and sitting down for which she pleaded. Boaz was known through the whole district as a man of honor, strong as he was considerate, fit to rule others because able to control himself, a man to whom a defenseless woman might intrust herself without the slightest fear of his taking undue advantage of her, one to whom the boys and youths of Bethlehem looked up as their model, and whose pure, simple, and beautiful life was the bread on which his fellow-townsmen daily lived. In former days, Naomi, in common with

the rest of her people, had read him as we read a book, and was persuaded that he was a man of his word, one who could be relied on to see to the end any duty which he undertook. "Sit still, my daughter," she therefore said; "for the man will not rest until he have finished the thing this day."

It is thus, and only thus, that we too can rest. Every year the stress and speed of life increase. Events, engagements, books, opinions, flash past us, as the country seen through the windows of an express-train. One impression has not time to fix itself on the inner eye before it is succeeded by another, by which it is effaced. It is increasingly difficult to find time literally to sit down, and even if the physical attitude is assumed, the mind is invaded by so many

distracting thoughts and suggestions that it is almost impossible to sit *still*.

It is nèedless to emphasize the immense injury which is inflicted by this unceasing restlessness, not only on the worker, but on the work. Manufacturers of goods requiring the highest finish are compelled to move their workshops from the feverish rush of our great cities to the quiet of country towns, where the current of life runs less swiftly and it is possible to look from end to end of the main street at noon without descrying a single individual. What obtains in respect to artistic fancy and skill is still more true of the highest forms of spiritual work. The incessant demand for fresh matter, for the fulfilment of public duty, for an opinion on every new book or fresh development of the

eager life around, is diametrically opposed to that quietude of the soul in which the muddy waters can deposit their heavy silt and become clear again and able to reflect the azure sky. It is therefore the sorrowful confession of many foremost workers that they are able to complete nothing, and all their work bears trace of the pressure under which it has been produced.

Besides this, the restlessness of the soul breeds irritability, fretfulness, and nervous depression. The home life suffers. The family circle is broken up. The natural play of disposition on disposition has no opportunity for its wholesome ministry. There is a story told of the children of a certain enthusiastic artist, who were found running in desperate haste, as if pursued, to a remote

corner of the house, and who gave the explanation, "Father's painting a sky;" and perhaps many a home where some prominent worker lodges—for it is little else—is shadowed by a similar fear, the indirect result of the overpressure of the age.

It is only as we sit still that we can elaborate our fairest work; conceive, like Mary, the idea of breaking alabaster on the head of our Lord; utter, like David, our noblest prayers; or preserve that natural healthy life which is the charm of the home, the secret of healthy influence over others.

But there is only one method by which this lost art can be regained: we must shelter ourselves in absolute faith behind Jesus Christ. These two solitary women were able to still each other

and themselves by remembering that Boaz had their matter in hand, and that he was both able and eager to carry it through. They might sit still because he would not sit still. They might rest since he would not. Their cause was safe in his hands, and he would see it to the end, whatever it might be. Happy is it when we can thus hand over our many anxieties and burdens to the Lord, and be sure that He has assumed them, bears them in His heart, and will not rest until He has seen them safely to the end. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. Fret not thyself."

The habit of reckoning on Christ is the key to a restful life. Not only to depend on His promises, but to count on Himself. A good man, one of those for whom some would even dare to die,

is more than his words or assurances, because a case may arise not covered by either of them, and then we can fall back on what we know him to be. Christ is more than His spoken and recorded words.

Is there some great perplexity in your life, the result of some indiscretion or sin in years gone by? Is there a lurking evil in your heart, which you have tried in vain to quell? Is there some anxiety about one dearer to you than life, who is drifting beyond your reach? Is there the sickness of heart-ache and despair? Is there a yearning for all that can be realized of deliverance from sin, the filling of the Spirit, the life and love of God? Go to the great Kinsman, find Him when you can speak to Him without interruption, tell Him all,

hand it all over to Him, then go home and sit still.

If there is anything for you to do He will tell you what it is, and give you the grace to do it. But if not, sit still, wait patiently, quiet yourself like a weaned child: He cannot forget, He will not procrastinate, He cannot fail. He is allowing no grass to grow under His feet. He is making haste, though He appears to tarry. And presently at the door there will be a shout of joy. Then the bridal bells shall ring out over an accomplished purpose, and your life shall be no more Marah, but Naomi, and bitterness shall be swallowed up in blessedness.

X

THE SUPREME GIFT OF THE ASCENSION

X

THE SUPREME GIFT OF THE ASCENSION

To the simple graphic story of the inspired annalists, the Apostle Peter, moved by the Holy Spirit, adds some significant details, in that great sermon which he preached on the day of Pentecost. He tells us that the ascension of our Lord was due not simply to the inherent virtue of His nature, but to the direct action and interposition of His Father, "being by the right hand of God exalted," as though, through the azure sky, the hand of God were reached down to our low earth, to raise His Son through all heavens to His throne.

But there is yet a more striking expression used by the apostle, the full significance of which evades our most searching scrutiny—that in which he speaks of Christ as *receiving* from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit. It was as if the ascension day, which began in Jerusalem and ended in glory, which exchanged the Mount of Olives at dawn for the meridian light of heaven's unsetting noon, witnessed also the reception on the part of Christ of a new accession of the power and grace of the Holy Ghost.

As Son of God, He had from all eternity been One with the Father and with the Holy Ghost, and it was impossible for Him to receive more than He already possessed; but on His incarnation He evidently entered into new

relations with the Divine Spirit, as is clear from many expressions used in reference to it throughout the gospel. We cannot penetrate the mystery of Christ's nature. It is secret. But we believe that God was manifest in the flesh, and it is from the human standpoint that we approach Him now, as one draws near the lower slopes of some soaring Alp, the upper reaches of which, untrodden by human foot, are veiled in perpetual cloud.

We are told that our Lord's birth was due to the Holy Ghost, and there is little doubt that during the thirty years of His seclusion at Nazareth He was perpetually beneath the teaching and molding influence of the Divine Spirit. But His contract with John the Baptist on the banks of the Jordan marked a

new epoch in His life. It was His Pentecost. He was then endued and anointed with the Spirit without measure; and from that time He is spoken of as being full of the Spirit, as returning in the power of the Spirit to His life-work, and as standing in the synagogue of Nazareth, conscious that the Spirit of the Lord was upon Him, and that He had been anointed to preach. All His miracles and words thereafter were wrought and spoken beneath that same inspiration. It was in the Eternal Spirit that He offered Himself upon the cross; through the spirit of holiness that He was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead; and it was through the Holy Ghost that He issued commands during the forty days of His posthumous min-

istry. He does not appear, however, to have had any special power of conferring upon others that Holy Spirit which, as Man, He had so fully realized. It is true that, after His resurrection, He bade the apostles and their associates receive the Holy Ghost, and the breath of His lips was the emblem of the gentle grace which He communicated. This, however, appears to have been rather an anticipation of the power which He was soon to assume, than to any large extent a manifestation of it. In any case there is a great contrast between the breath of the resurrection evening and the sound of the mighty rushing wind that filled all the house where they were sitting. Up to the time of His ascension, therefore, we may think of Jesus Christ as being charged with the

indwelling of the Holy Ghost to the fullest extent possible to our nature, and yet as not possessing in any great measure the faculty of communicating that Spirit to His Church.

With the ascension, however, all this was altered. He entered the presence of God as the representative Man, and as the Surety of His people. Indeed, to adopt the frequently recurring thought of the apostle, they rose with Him from His grave, and ascended with Him into the heavenlies. A great multitude, of every nation, kindred, people, and tongue, passed upward with Him as He crossed the confines between time and eternity, between the material and the spiritual, between the seen and the unseen, and in that multitude were included all who were to believe in Him through the

word of the gospel. The whole mystical body was represented in the Head; the Church stood in complete beauty before God. It is therefore clear that whatever He received from the Father He did not obtain for Himself, but as the Trustee of those for whom He stood. He obtained the Spirit in a new and unexampled measure that He might hold Him as a precious trust for those who, in the process of the years, would be twice born, once of nature, and once by the regenerating grace of His Spirit.

Notice that the word "receive," which almost always occurs in the Word of God of the Holy Spirit, is a phrase employed to denote the process by which our Lord became charged with the Holy Ghost as a reservoir or receptacle from which we were to receive grace upon

grace; and the whole Trinity was engaged in that august act by which the divine fulness was made to dwell in the Divine Man.

Turning now from the expression which sets forth our Lord's reception of the Holy Spirit at the hands of His Father, we may notice the expressions used of His communication of this priceless gift to His Church. Peter says, "He poured it forth" (Acts ii. 33). A similar expression is used of what occurred in the house of Cornelius (Acts x. 45). It is as though the walls of an inland lake were suddenly pierced, and the contents issued forth in torrents.

The word "fell upon" is also used of the experience of those first days (Acts xi. 15), indicating, doubtless, the heavenly source from which the divine influ-

ence came. This is in harmony with the thought of *anointing*. The holy chrism must needs fall upon us from above, that, passing downward from the Head, it may reach even the garment hem, and sanctify the commonest and most trivial acts of life (1 John ii. 27).

The word "baptism" is also used, especially by the Lord Himself (Acts i. 5), but it has been thought by some that this expression may perhaps apply only to the gift of the day of Pentecost (Acts ii.), to the outpouring of the Spirit in Samaria (Acts viii.), and to the first reception by Gentiles of the same august gift in the house of Cornelius (Acts x.). There is nothing to prevent our using the expression more widely except that it is not used throughout the New Testament in this general sense, and there

is some fear lest the frequent use of the term "baptism," as applied to the Holy Ghost, may lead people to look for something extraordinary, abnormal, and emotional.

The word "filling," therefore, is a term which best expresses our experience, as we claim our part in the supreme gift of the ascension. After *His* Pentecost our Lord was *filled* with the Holy Spirit; and after their baptism in the upper room the little company that had gathered there is described as being "filled," women as well as men, the rank and file of the Church equally with the apostles. So throughout the New Testament this is the term most often employed. There is this thought connected with the conception of filling which may comfort some whose natures are un-

emotional, that a well may be filled by the percolation of drop after drop, as well as by the rush of a stream, and that those who are able to claim the indwelling of the Spirit of God in His fulness, without rapture or emotion, or any definite experience, may as surely count on being filled as those who can point to the time and place when they passed through some marked spiritual experience which was attended by deep and rapturous joy.

It is sometimes asked whether the gift of Pentecost refers primarily to character or to office in the early Church. But they appear to have been closely conjoined. The chapter which begins with the account of the outpouring of the Spirit ends with the delightful picture of the love and unselfishness, the glad-

ness and simplicity of the Church, and it is after these characteristics have been enumerated that we are told of the evident power that it wielded over men. Stephen is described as full of grace and power (Acts vi. 8, R. V.). There can be no doubt that the first indication of the new era which dated from Pentecost was the cessation of rivalry and jealousy, which had marred the relations of the apostles, and the introduction of a spirit of gentle love. At the same time it is unquestionable that one main end in the gift of Pentecost was to equip the Church for the work of evangelizing the world. Jesus did not attempt His public ministry until He was filled with the Holy Ghost; He forbade His disciples undertaking their work in the Church until they had received their

Pentecostal equipment. The presence of the Holy Spirit is perpetually associated with *power*, as in the case of Stephen and many others. And in Ephesians iv. the apostle distinctly associates the ascension with the gifts to prophets, teachers, pastors, evangelists, and other workers in the ranks of God's people.

The filling of the Holy Spirit means holiness, purity, love; but it includes more. If you have the former alone, never rest until by faith in the ascended Saviour you have become, in your measure, filled with power, before which hard hearts shall break, dry eyes shall fill with tears, conscience shall spring from its grave and fill the chambers of the heart with remonstrances, and your foes shall be unable to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which you speak.

The work of the Spirit within us precedes His anointing upon us; but some experience the first without going forward to claim the second. It is much to have Him as a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty; but let us ask Him to be unto us also for strength, to enable us to turn the battle from the gate (Isa. xxviii. 6).

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